(b) if so, what are the details thereof stating the percentage of rise in the imports of seconds and defective steel items during the financial year 1998-99 and the current financial year; and

(c) what is its overall impact on the domestic industry?

THE MINISTRY OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) to (c) There has been an increase in the import of seconds and defectives of certain items of finished steel and Tin plates in the past two-three years. As per available information, the import of seconds and defective steel items increased by 29% in 1998-99 as compared to 1997-98. The import of seconds and defectives during April, 1999 has been 409000 tonnes.

The increase in the import of seconds and defective steel items has depressed domestic market prices and has adversely affected the indigenous producers.

Import of coaking coal from Australian companies

70. SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA: Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that SAIL has been importing coaking coal from Australian Companies for years through agents by paying huge commission running into crores of rupees and allegedly, the purchasing price was rigged in the agreement submitted to Government for clearance;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the amount involved in the payment of commission;

(d) whether Government have reviewed the deal entered into by SAIL with the Australian Companies; and

(e) if so, the outcome thereof stating the action taken by Government in the matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) to (e) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.